Claims

1. A method of processing a stream of data, comprising:

receiving a stream of data, the stream of data including a plurality of encoded symbols;

contemporaneously processing a first subset of the encoded symbols to identify a second subset of the encoded symbols, where each encoded symbol in the second subset uses a common coding context;

evaluating at least one symbol from the second subset of encoded symbols to determine the common coding context for the second subset; and

using the common coding context to process the second subset of encoded symbols.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein processing the second subset of encoded symbols comprises decoding the stream of data.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the data stream includes encoded video data.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the encoded symbols represent elements of the encoded video data.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the encoded symbols are encoded using the H.264 standard encoding scheme.

6. The method of claim 4 wherein the encoded symbols are encoded using the MPEG-4 part 10 standard encoding scheme.

7. A method of processing a stream of data, comprising:

receiving a stream of data, the stream of data comprising a plurality of symbols to be processed;

contemporaneously processing a first subset of the symbols to identify a second subset of the symbols, where each symbol in the second subset uses a common coding context;

evaluating at least one symbol from the second subset of symbols to determine the common coding context; and

using the common coding context to process the second subset of symbols.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the processing of the second subset of symbols includes encoding the stream of data.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the stream of data includes video data.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the symbols represent elements of the video data.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the video data is encoded using the H.264 standard encoding scheme.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the video data is encoded using the MPEG-4 part 10 standard encoding scheme.